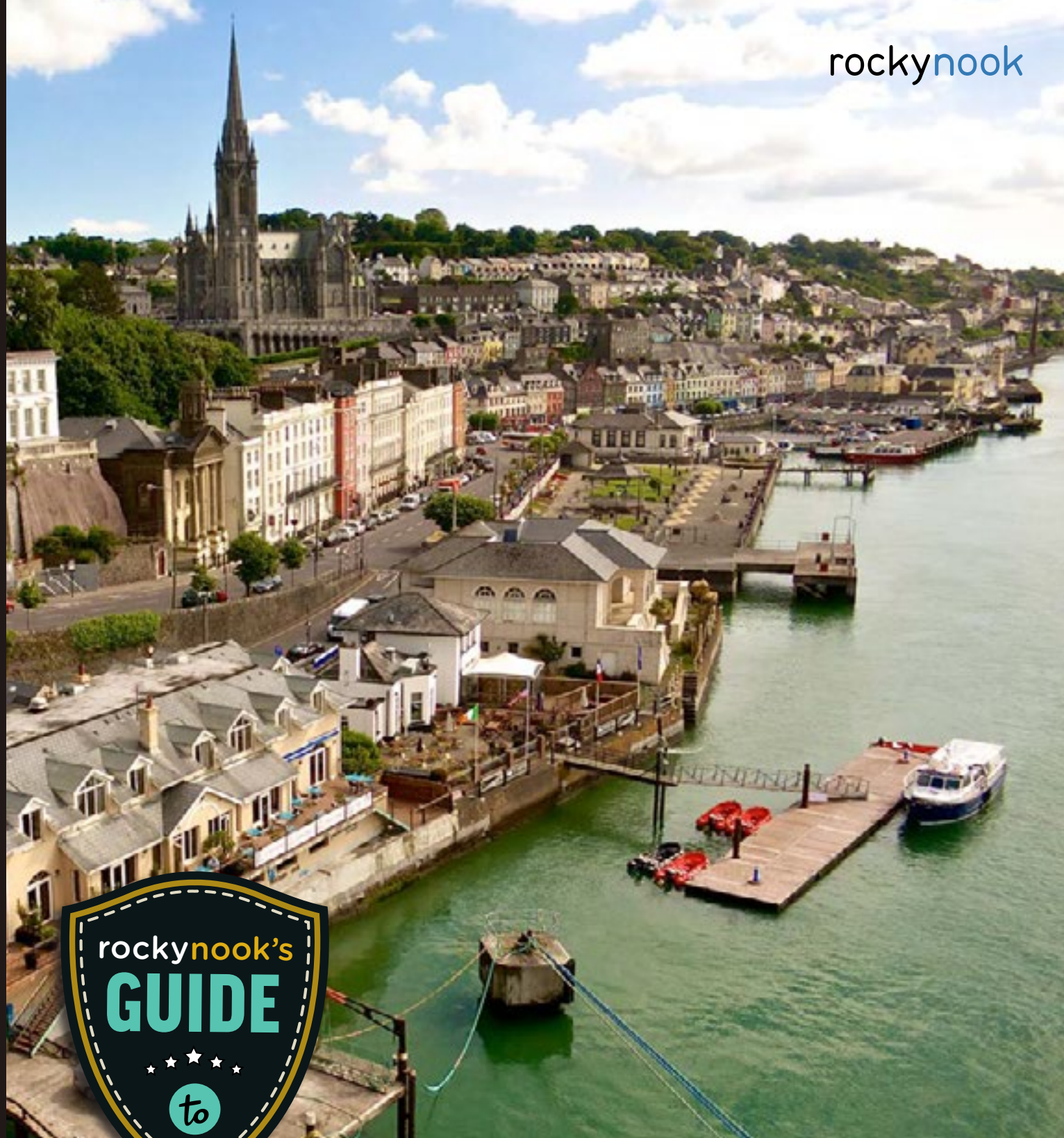


rockynook



# Travel for Photographers

MAKE GREAT PHOTOS ON ANY ADVENTURE

DERRICK STORY



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My parents didn't travel much when we were kids. Our summer vacations were spent at the shore, and that was pretty much the extent of my early wanderings.

At the age of 11 I fell in love with photography. My great uncle, a successful cartoonist, gave me an Argus 35mm camera. My parents chipped in by relinquishing a corner of the garage, under the staircase, for a rustic darkroom.

Like every photographer who ever donned a neck strap, I cornered the family dog for portrait sessions, took pictures of flowers, and found new ways to torment my younger sister by capturing awkward candids of her. And for a while, this was enough.

By high school, I was shooting for the local paper and the yearbook. I've never recorded so many group shots in such a condensed period in my life. Who even knew there was a club dedicated to goats, let alone chess, dressmaking, and the junior officers of America? I enjoyed the work because it involved using a camera. But in my heart, I wanted something more for my photography.

Being that I was a relatively trustworthy teenager, at 17 my parents granted me permission for a solo road trip from our home in Southern California to Vancouver, BC. Maybe this was their acknowledgement that we never traveled as a family. So, I packed my 1961 VW bug with a suitcase and a camera bag, then drove off early one summer morning to explore the great north.

Those two weeks changed my life.

I learned that there are two distinct sides to photography. The domestic side, which I was well versed in, focuses on daily life, work, family events, creative experiments, and documentation. Instead of painting the evening's meal on a cave wall, we take a picture of a plate served in a restaurant and post it online. For most of us, this aspect represents the bulk of our shooting.

Then, at some point, we're introduced to the exotic: our first roadside apple stand in the state of Washington, silhouetted palm trees against a Hawaiian sunset, a majestic cathedral older than anything we've ever seen before. And as we marvel at these sites with our eyes, a desire burns inside to capture this magic through the lens or our camera, so that we can hang on to this moment forever.

Sometimes we're successful. But far too often, the images we collect along the way pale in comparison to the experience itself. And so the addiction begins. Learn more, travel farther, buy more gear—in the hope that finally we can snare those wonderful feelings and bring them home.

And that, my fellow explorer, is the subject of this guide. Because as long as our shoulders are strong enough to carry a bag, and our hands steady enough to hold a camera, we want to embark upon that next journey. And maybe this time, finally, come home with images that do justice to this wonderful, vibrant world we live in.



# The Psychology of Photography on the Road

When we photograph familiar sites, such as our neighborhood, we're able to discern interesting subjects from the mundane. That's because over time we've had the opportunity to see our surroundings in changing light, different seasons, and various weather conditions. When something does jump out at us, it's probably a good shot.

On the road, this can be a challenge. Unlike shooting at home, everything is new. And as a result, we start photographing without the benefit of a seasoned eye. So we end up recording the same shots that thousands before us have captured.

What we really need is time. After a few days, our vision becomes more attuned to what is really a good opportunity compared to a boring snapshot (Figure 1). I'm sure you've experienced this, at least in hindsight when reviewing your images back home.

There's a saying among writers that you should throw away your first thousand words. The thinking is that you haven't warmed up yet. The brain hasn't really grasped the essence of the topic yet.

To some degree, this could apply to the first 50 frames that you shoot at a new location. You're excited. Everything is visually stimulating. It all might be gone when you return tomorrow.

But the truth is, if you were to go back the next day, you would most likely make better pictures (Figure 2). Your eyes would be more discriminating and your pulse a little calmer.



**Figure 1:** Interesting shot or just a ho-hum postcard? That's your call, but I did wait a couple days before capturing this image.

So how do you work with this phenomenon? If it's a longer trip, such as a week in Maui, it's easier. Go ahead and shoot those early frames. Have fun. After all, you are on vacation, right? But don't think of these recorded subjects as one and done. Instead, consider them scouting shots.

Later, when you're sipping a frosty drink beneath a thatched umbrella, review your images on the camera's LCD or your tablet computer, and really look at them. Was this the right time of day for this particular composition? Is there a better vantage point? Should I compose a little tighter, or open up the frame? Do I need people in the picture to better convey perspective?



This is a fun activity on vacation. At least it is for photographers. To have the luxury of reviewing a round of images while relaxing in a chaise lounge, then the ability to go back and refine your shots...well, no wonder we love casual travel.

Then take that knowledge, and go back and shoot again. This time, plan the optimal time of day and perspective, and see what you can do.

Things become more challenging when time is limited. This happens often with business travel, guided tours, and family outings (all of which I'll cover in a bit) (Figure 3). In this scenario, you have little control over your circumstances. If you're standing on the top of a mountain in the middle of the day, so be it. You're going to have to change your approach.

The first step is to acknowledge that you're really going for one or two great shots, as opposed to dozens of boring ones. So where is



**Figure 2:** When I first arrived, I captured a similar shot, but without the foreground objects. When I reviewed the shot at the hotel, I thought, “I should add people.” So I went back again for this one.



that hero image? Do you pull out a polarizer and emphasize that magnificent sky? Is a sweeping panorama your best bet? Can you do something with perspective, such as getting low to the ground, capturing tourists' shoes in the foreground with a stunning valley below?

Find a shot that defines the moment, then work it in the limited time you have.

At this point, I'm not going to put forth any more possible solutions, because I want to cover family and business travel in upcoming sections. Right now, the real message is understanding the situation you're in, then maximizing the opportunity.

Of all the challenges in photography, traveling with family can be one of the most daunting. In large part the disconnect widens because stalking great imagery is so different than being present for your road companions.

When I put away the camera, I engage in conversation, contribute to decision-making, and focus as much on those around me as I do on the scenery in front of me. On the other hand, as a photographer, I'm quiet and self-absorbed—not exactly the best vacation partner.

Over the years I've discovered that embracing either extreme is unsatisfying. If I say to myself, "On this vacation I'm going to forget about pictures except for family snapshots," then I return home frustrated about all of the great opportunities I missed.

If I go too far the other way and direct all of my attention to photography, then there's a good chance I will return home alone. If ever the phrase "choose your battles" applies, it is here. As a result, I've developed a few strategies to secure a middle ground.



**Figure 3:** We had a busy schedule this family day in Paris, so I had to work quickly. I included the motion of people to make this shot just a bit different than many I've seen.

### Build Photo Shoots into the Itinerary

I understand that you can only plan so much before you leave the house. But nailing down a few of the best possibilities will help you relax during the journey. Try this approach.

First, do your homework. Before you ever leave the house, identify the best photo opportunities available on the trip. Second, negoti-

ate. Tell your travel mates the spots you would like a little extra time for shooting, and work out a reasonable plan for everyone. Third, keep your word. If you asked for an extra hour in Yosemite Valley, and the family accommodates by having a late afternoon snack while you shoot, then be back at the picnic bench when you promised. This builds good faith for upcoming requests.

## Get Up Early Before Everyone Else

Most family members sleep later than I do anyway. I can cash this in for a few extra shots by letting them know that I'm going to quietly slip out for an hour early in the morning for some bonus photography. And that I will be back in plenty of time to make the coffee and join everyone for breakfast (Figure 4).

The key to this plan is to remember to let them know the night before. This avoids the unsettling situation of having a family member missing when everyone else wakes up.

The other key to success is to not abuse the privilege. If indeed you return before breakfast and no one misses a beat with their morning routine, then this approach can yield some great imagery with virtually no cost to travel mates.

## Ride Shotgun

This one is so obvious that I can't believe I overlooked it for so long. The passenger seat can provide a great vantage point for some very interesting photography (Figure 5). But you can't take advantage of it if you're driving the car.



**Figure 4:** An early morning walk provided this backlit shot. It was one of my most popular Instagram shots in 2014, and I have it hanging on the wall of my studio.

I'm lucky because my wife loves to drive. So all I have to do is provide navigation services when required, and I can otherwise do whatever I wish from the passenger seat. And when traveling through interesting countryside, stopping in small villages, and winding down picturesque highways, I have my camera out and ready to shoot.



This is frosting on the cake. Because you didn't plan these shots. They just happen. And sometimes they provide a spontaneity that can't be mapped out ahead of time.

If you're normally the driver, then pitch the idea for sharing the duties behind the wheel. You can handle all of the stuff at night and on free-ways. No problem there. But when exploring side roads and countryside, put a camera in your hands instead. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

## Take Candid Shots Instead of All Posed Shots

Of course you're going to take the self-timer group shot every now and then. If you didn't, there wouldn't be any pictures on the mantel, right?

But these very family members who might at first seem like challenges to your art, can instead become the subjects for it. Catching them engaged with one another, marveling at a historical monument, recording the giggles out of sheer fatigue...these can all produce great images (Figure 6).

And the best part about it: when you do catch a spontaneous moment, you don't have to worry about getting a model release.



**Figure 5:** You guessed it: This landscape was shot from the car window while on a road trip down Highway 101 in California.

## Business Travel

I've had friends tell me of all the exotic places they've visited on business, only to show me a handful of restaurant shots and a picture of their hotel.

Traveling on someone else's dime is about as good as it gets, as long as you carve out opportunities to escape the meeting room

and wander the streets a bit (Figure 7). And like traveling with family, this requires some planning.

I'll tell you right now, if you don't put photography in the schedule, you'll never get to it. Your employer might be a good guy for selecting you to attend those meetings in London. But he's not your personal patron saint of the arts. From his point of view, and rightly so, you're there to work.

A strategy to keep him happy, and one that allows you to leverage this opportunity photographically, is to add a day or two that's



**Figure 6:** I think this shot will get more interesting as years go by and technology changes.

on your dime. In other words, take care of business, then self-fund your art.

By adding a day or two for photography off the expense account, you accomplish a few things at once. First, you're already more comfortable in your new setting, which often leads to better pictures. And even though you're picking



**Figure 7:** I made sure I set aside some time during a business trip to visit Crescent Beach, Florida, on my own dime.

up an extra night's hotel and meals, this is far less expensive than a fully self-funded trip. And finally, you probably wouldn't be there in the first place if it weren't for your boss. (You might want to send him a shot as a thank you.)

Again, the key to success is planning. Before you ever leave the home office, get this cleared with your employer and do some research. Then you can return home with more than jet lag and a stack of receipts.

## The Photography Workshop

Here's a situation where being with others can improve your photography. Photography workshops put us in contact with others who share our passion, and in locations that are visually rich (Figure 8). Plus, if we're lucky, the facilitator teaches us a few things and provides a dash of entertainment value too.



I would go so far as to say that a workshop deserves a place on every shooter's bucket list. And to get the most out of these opportunities, keep the following factors in mind.

## Group Size

A workshop with 8 people is much different than one with 28. And it's not just personal attention. It's dynamics too. When you have a large group of people, they tend to break into smaller, impenetrable subgroups. And once these are established, they seldom change. But if you start with a small group, then folks tend to hang together, and there's a more unified feeling to the event.

Smaller groups are also better for street photography, restaurant meals, and transportation. It's logical that a workshop with 8 people might cost a bit more than one with 28, but not that much more. And in my opinion, the quality of the experience far out-weighs the price.

## Travel Time

Getting to the workshop is one thing. That's on your dime, and you're in charge of the itinerary. But once the even starts, you don't want to spend all day driving around in a bus instead of taking pictures (Figure 9).

When weighing your options between event possibilities, find out the allocation of time. How many hours will be in the classroom, in the field, socializing, and yes, on the bus? A tightly designed workshop is a better experience than one that attempts to cover too much ground.



**Figure 8:** I lead a photography workshop every autumn. Great weather and camaraderie with my fellow photographers.



**Figure 9:** Yes, some travel is involved in most workshops. But you don't want to spend too much time on the road...in the middle of nowhere.



## What's Included and What's Not

Other questions that need to be answered include:

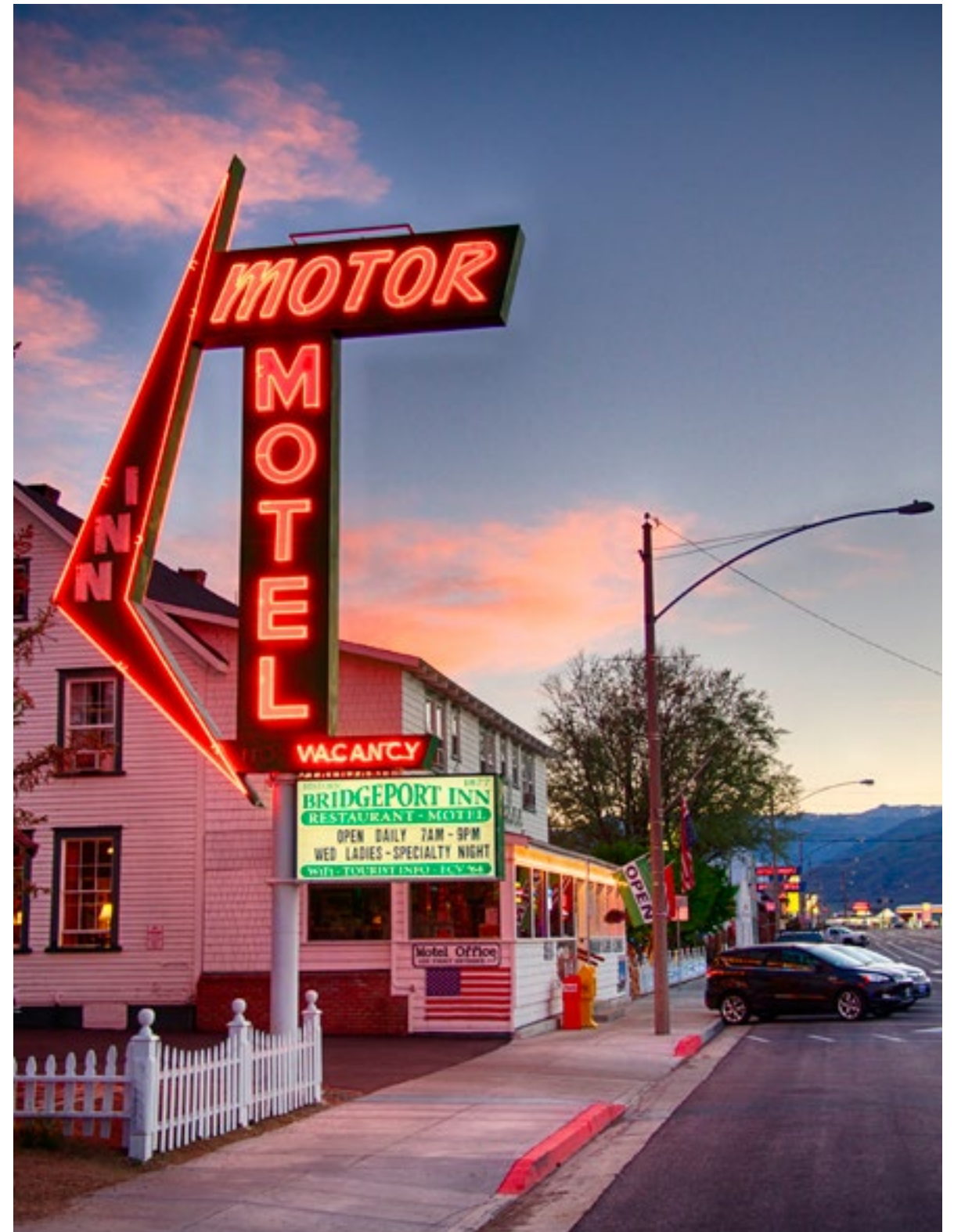
- How many meals are provided, and which ones am I on the hook for?
- Are all admission fees covered?
- Are there group rates for the hotels (Figure 10)?
- What is the refund policy if I learn that I can't attend?
- Are there any sponsor perks or discounts?

## Level of Instruction

Most photography workshops have a teaching component to them. Try to find out if the level of instruction is a good fit for you. If you're a serious enthusiast, you certainly don't want to spend your money on an event that's geared toward beginners.

Along with this, consider the personality of the instructor. Some workshop leaders are very hands-on and want to be looking over your shoulder. Others tend to let you shoot, then review your images during classroom sessions. It's worth knowing which type you're most comfortable with, and whether the event you're contemplating along those lines.

When you find the right fit, photography workshops are energizing. You come home with new ideas and memory cards full of pictures. Plus, having the opportunity to spend time with others who share your passion is very satisfying.



**Figure 10:** One of the advantages of group travel is that you should get a group rate for accommodations.



## Solo Trips

Ah, the lone photographer standing on a mountain top with his trusty tripod at his side: it's a great image for ads, but solo trips have their own set of challenges (Figure 11).



**Figure 11:** Traveling by yourself may get a bit lonely, but you do have complete say when it comes to the itinerary.

First, you have to shoulder all of the expenses yourself.

Two people can ride in a car and share a motel room for the same price as one. Second, you have to keep safety in mind. Make sure loved ones know your itinerary and can reach you during the adventure. And third, yes, you have that mountain top all to yourself, but you'll miss the shared-experience aspect of the day. It's fun to talk about the day over a beer at a roadside cafe.

All that being said, I've been exploring the world alone since I was 17, and there is something to be said for having all the time that's required to get the shot that you want. And don't forget to take a few shots with you in them. Some of my "self-timer" portraits while traveling alone are my favorite shots of me.

## 10 Tips for the Road Warrior Photographer

There is something different about working in a location that you may never see again. So the information that you gather at that moment may be all that you ever get. Here are 10 tips to make sure you come away with great stuff.

### 1. Capture Context as Well as Imagery

Where you took that photo, along with some information about the location, becomes more important once you return home and are sorting through hundreds of images. In addition to the masterpiece itself, take pictures of signs, information placards, and brochures. (Yes brochures!) As time goes on, this content becomes invaluable (Figure 12).



**Figure 12:** Don't forget where you were when you took those 50 shots.

## 2. Record Geodata for Key Locations

Cameras with built-in GPS really never caught on. But that's okay, because you can capture location data by taking a picture with your smartphone. Make sure the timestamp for your camera and mobile device are in sync, and you're set. You can add that location data to your images back home.

To prevent unnecessary battery drain on their phones, some photographers prefer to use separate trackers that also sync with your camera. These do work well. It just depends on how many extra devices you want bring along.

## 3. Talk to Locals

I would love to say that strangers have always pointed me to great photo opportunities, but that's just not true. Someone else's idea of a striking image isn't always the same as mine.

That being said, locals have pointed me to spots that I would never have discovered on my own (Figure 13). Keep safety in mind when following these tips. And I usually go for the low-hanging fruit—not the exotic backcountry adventures.

But the real gem for me has been the other locations I discovered when en route to a tip. And that seems to be the true value of talking with locals, which is getting you off the beaten track to discover new opportunities.



**Figure 13:** Talk to local shop owners and residents. And take their pictures too.

## 4. Ask for Portraits

I realize this takes a little practice, but it is so worth it. And three out of four times, my experience has been that the subject was flattered to be asked. I look for people engaged in their daily activities: the bakery truck driver delivering bread, the shop owner setting up a display, the gardener watering her plants.

The advantage of asked portraits is that you get eye contact and the pose you want (Figure 14). Plus, you avoid the creepy behavior of trying to sneak a photo without someone knowing they're the subject. Speaking of creepy, you're in more dangerous waters when children are involved. I know your intentions are good. But I'm also a parent, and I can relate to being protective of my kids. These situations call for a large dose of caution and empathy.





**Figure 14:** By asking for portraits, you'll get eye contact.

If you're asked for a copy of the image, be sure to deliver. I carry business cards with me and tell the subject to send me an email request. That way, all you have to do is attach the image and hit reply.

For shots that look like keepers, you may want to get a model release. Be sure to have a few

releases in your camera bag or an app handy on your mobile device. I prefer paper, however, because subjects seem to respond to that better.

If you want a model release, get it on the spot. The odds of securing one later are dismal. As in, I don't think it's worked once for me, ever.

And finally, if someone asks what a release is for, tell them the truth. I say that this is a wonderful image that I want to have as part of my trip.

## 5. Think Like a Movie Director

It's so easy for us to fall into a visual rut and record the same type of shot over and over. But if you think like a movie director trying to tell a story, you'll bring a greater variety to your images.

First, there is the establishing shot. Where are we? What is going on around here? These compositions tend to

be wider, captured with 24mm, 28mm, and 35mm focal lengths. If your final product ends up being a slideshow, these are perfect shots for a Ken Burns effect (Figure 15).

Midrange compositions are good for the actual storytelling. Examples are people conversing, activities in buildings, juxtapositions of signs and activities. I tend to work with 45mm to 85mm focal lengths for my midrange shots.

And don't forget the closeups. Details of buildings, flora, and people add drama to the story. Whether it's an expressive look or a tarnished brass door knob, getting close attracts the attention of your viewer.

**Figure 15:** Wouldn't it be fun to pull out on this shot for a slideshow?







**Figure 16:** This two-second exposure required a tripod.

Later, when you get home, you can apply just the right mix of these shots. But in the field, have all of them in your consciousness as you shoot.

## 6. Bring Some Sort of Tripod

Even though I'm known as The Nimble Photographer, I always have some type of camera support with me (Figure 16). It may not be a six foot set of sticks, but then again, that's not usually what I need.

There are a variety of creative shots, from long exposures to deep depth of field to panoramas, that require camera support. My favorite gizmo is the \$15 Joby GorillaPod Micro 800 ([http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/825599-REG/Joby\\_GP20\\_01AM\\_GORILLA-POD\\_MICRO\\_800\\_GRAY.html/BI/5527/KBID/6357](http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/825599-REG/Joby_GP20_01AM_GORILLA-POD_MICRO_800_GRAY.html/BI/5527/KBID/6357)). It only weighs a couple ounces, but supports up to two pounds. And when folded, it's about the size of a Swiss Army knife.

If you need a bit more tripod, but still want to travel light, take a look at the \$99 MeFOTO Daytrip (<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/>



**Figure 17:** Eat before or after twilight. While the sun sets you should be feasting on the colorful sky.

[product/994911-REG/mefoto\\_a0320q00r\\_daytrip\\_tripod\\_kit.html/BI/5527/KBID/6357](http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/994911-REG/mefoto_a0320q00r_daytrip_tripod_kit.html/BI/5527/KBID/6357)) that folds to a mere 9.4" but extends to two feet. It weighs less than two pounds, and is very steady.

What you don't want to do is bring a set of sticks that you won't carry with you. Find something you like, and put it to use.

## 7. Don't Eat Dinner at Twilight

The last place you want to be when the sky bursts with color and the city lights come on is in a darkened restaurant with an over-cooked burger. Plan your meals around great light, not during it.





**Figure 18:** Vacation is a great time to experiment with some of those artistic features in your camera, such as this dramatic tone art filter.

Twilight and night shots add drama to your visual story and are usually crowd favorites. And the fact of the matter is, they're easy to shoot. It's just that many travelers don't plan for them (Figure 17).

I like to pack a moderately wide, fast lens, such as a 35mm f/1.8 prime. They don't take up much room, but boy are they great for shooting at the edges of the day. Include your lightweight camera support and refresh yourself on how to use the self-timer or remote release. And most importantly, keep your eyes open during the day for great twilight locations.

I usually have a light snack before I shoot, then celebrate after the sun has set. But the last place I want to be is stuck in a restaurant looking out the window at a great sunset.

## 8. Experiment with Special Effects

Most mirrorless and compact enthusiast cameras include some terrific special effects, from film emulations to dramatic tones. In our day-to-day lives, we might not have the time to experiment with these. But on vacation, well, that's a whole different matter (Figure 18).

Many cameras will provide you with a RAW+JPEG safety net: when you apply the special effect, it appears in the JPEG file, and the RAW is left untouched. That way you can experiment freely, knowing that you'll always have the untainted RAW file to fall back on.

Double-check to see how your camera handles these effects, because they can add some visual spice to your work.

## 9. Master Shooting Through Glass

There are a lot of great shots just waiting for us behind windows and cases. What a great feeling to open the hotel room curtains and behold a magnificent cityscape below. There's an establishing shot for ya!

The technique for shooting through glass is easy. If you can, dim the lights behind you. Attach a lens shade to the front of your camera. Find a clean area of glass, and position the lens shade against it so no stray light can come in from the sides. Take your picture. It's that easy (Figure 19).

By blocking out stray light with your lens shade (or cupped hand



**Figure 19:**

Don't let a pane of glass prevent you from getting a shot that you want.



in a pinch), you eliminate those unwanted reflections in the glass, and all you record is the scene in front of you. This technique works for airplane windows, museum displays (be sure to follow the rules though!), aquariums, and tall buildings.

## 10. Be a Good Ambassador

Before you leave the house, remember to pack a positive attitude. There is truly something to the kindness-of-strangers phenomenon. But my impression is that it starts with me (Figure 20).

Respect for others has not only led to great imagery, it has also helped me out of some tough spots on the road. I try to keep in



**Figure 20:** Be a good ambassador, and maybe they will let you shoot a portrait too.

mind how I would feel if a photographer approached me unannounced. I also acknowledge that everyone's time is valuable, and that I don't want to take much of it. And finally, learning about customs and culture for the places you visit should be part of your photography research.

Respectful interaction with others will serve you well, whether you're taking pictures or just taking in the sights.



## A Word About Gear

Telling photographers what to pack is a bit like suggesting a scalpel to a surgeon. My guess is that you've spent plenty of time contemplating your gear and figuring out what you need. But the point that I want to make is: how much of what you have is really necessary on the road (Figure 21)?

I'll give you an example. For my assignment in Cuba, I could bring a total of 17 pounds of carry-on luggage. I knew that I was going to use my mirrorless cameras because of their compactness. But I had to really think about which lenses to pack.

The strategy I settled on was a daytime/nighttime approach. When working outside during the mornings and afternoons, I had plenty of light. So I could get by with two zooms: a wide to medium (e.g. 24mm–85mm) and a medium to long (e.g. 70mm–200mm).

Then, for the evening shoots, I would switch out the zooms from my shoulder bag for two fast primes. These were much more effective in low light, such as shooting in restaurants and nightclubs. I opted for 35mm and 90mm f/1.8 optics.

These two tandems worked out perfectly. I brought two camera bodies, a flash, extra batteries, plenty of memory, and the ability to back up everything nightly. My goal was to have what I needed, and nothing more.

To help with that, here's one of my favorite tips. A week before departure, pack the gear bag that you think you're going to need on the road. Bring it with you everyday — to work, at home, going



**Figure 21:** Bring a packable shoulder bag that you can use for day trips. That way you can leave unnecessary gear in the hotel safe.

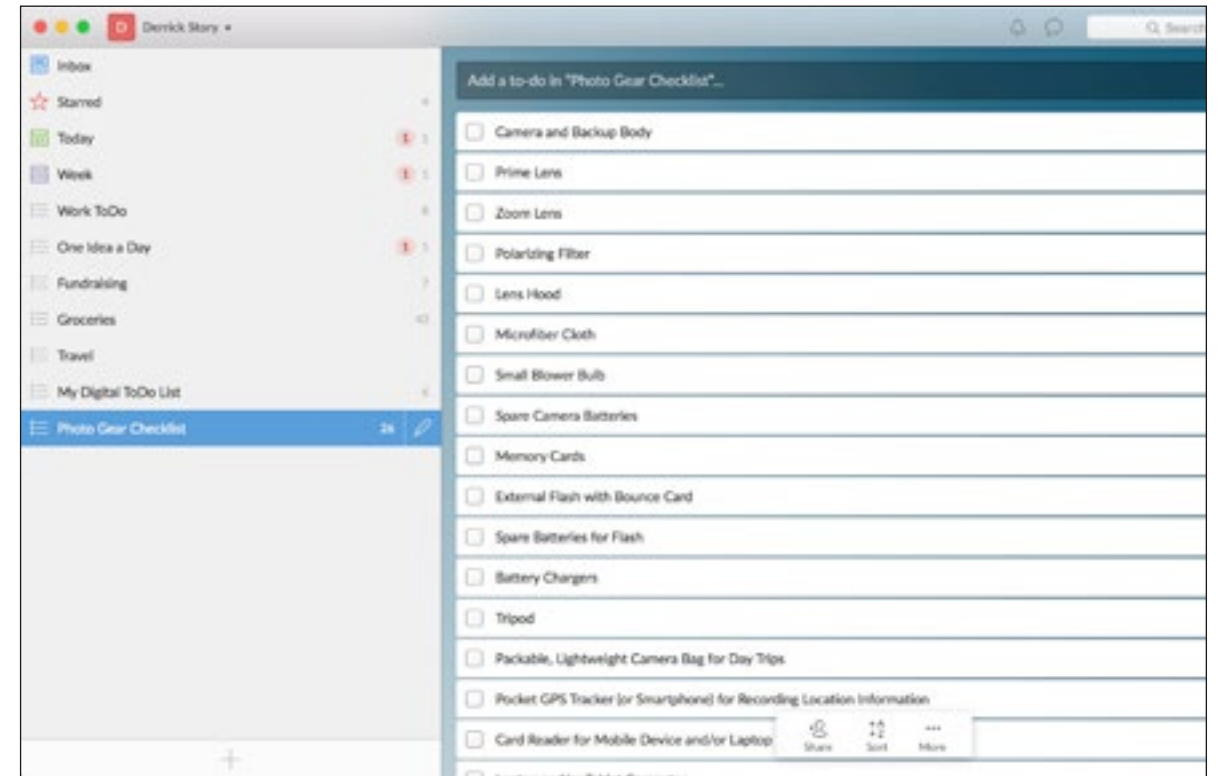
out to eat. Use only what's inside for your photography during this test. At the end of the week, I promise you, you'll have a better idea of what's missing, and more likely, what can be left behind.



## Checklists and Journals

Since we were just talking about gear, using mobile apps to manage your checklists and journals is very handy on the road. I use Wunderlist for my equipment checklist and for keeping track of photo ideas (Figure 22). Here's the gear list that I review before leaving the house.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and Backup Body  | <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop and/or Tablet Computer   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prime Lens  | <input type="checkbox"/> Chargers for Laptop and/or Tablet Computer and Smartphone                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zoom Lens   | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Cards with Current Email Address   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polarizing Filter   | <input type="checkbox"/> Model Releases  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lens Hood   | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Pen   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Microfiber Cloth  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rubber Bands and Gaffe Tape (one strip can be stored on the inside of camera bag) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small Blower Bulb   | <input type="checkbox"/> Allen Wrench for Tripod and Coin for Tightening Screws                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare Camera Batteries  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses, Sunblock, Bandana, and Lip Balm                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memory Cards  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hat and Lightweight Rain Poncho   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> External Flash with Bounce Card                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket First Aid Kit with Pain Reliever   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare Batteries for Flash   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Battery Chargers  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tripod  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Packable, Lightweight Camera Bag for Day Trips                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket GPS Tracker (or Smartphone) for Recording Location Information |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Card Reader for Mobile Device and/or Laptop                           |  |



**Figure 22:** Here are my Wunderlist reminders so I don't forget any gear.

I also keep a journal app on my iPhone. I've been using Day One, which allows me to include a photo with the journal entry, and it reads the current weather and location information too. I've found that just a few quick notes with an image is enough to jog my memory once I'm home. Plus I like having the actual spelling of names so I don't have to look them up later.

One feature that I've found very helpful with these types of apps is the ability to sync across all devices and computers. So if I make a quick journal entry on my iPhone in the field, I can add to it later on my laptop, and the updates are applied everywhere.



## RAW+JPEG

Seems odd that a menu setting would get its own section, doesn't it? But RAW+JPEG provides us with maximum flexibility on the road.

Let's start with the goals that many of us have. First, we want to bring home the best quality possible. If Paris is indeed a once-in-a-lifetime trip, then we want to be able to do anything with those photos, even if that's making a 16" x 20" print to hang over the couch.

But we also want to share our adventures with friends and family while we travel. That usually means posts to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flickr, and other social media. Since bandwidth can be an issue on the road, this has to happen as efficiently as possible.

Shooting RAW+JPEG can meet both goals. Keep the RAWs for importing into Lightroom or Capture One Pro later, and use the smaller JPEGs for posting to blogs and socials while on the road. I generally work with medium-sized, fine-quality JPEGs. I can use them right out of the camera, they upload relatively fast, and they look great on electronic devices (Figure 23).

Plus, as an extra measure of safety, when you do have some bandwidth, such as a decent WiFi connection at the hotel, you can upload all of your JPEGs to a Dropbox, Flickr, or another cloud account. That way, if the unthinkable were to happen to your equipment, you would at least still have those versions of the shots you took.

Medium-sized JPEGs also work great for viewing and editing on tablets. This is particularly important if you don't want to lug a



**Figure 23:** I posted the JPEG version of this shot while traveling. But when I returned home, I had fun really working the RAW file.

laptop all across Europe. A tablet provides a comfortable workspace for reviewing and editing pictures, yet it fits comfortably in your shoulder bag.

I've been asked many times about how I manage the RAW files. My system is simple. I bring an abundance of memory cards, and I never...I repeat...never erase a memory card on the road. When one fills up, I store it in a safe place, then start fresh with a new card. Once I return home, I upload all of the RAW files to an external drive and to my Capture One catalog on the computer.

The bottom line here is to identify your needs and set up your camera accordingly. This scenario has worked for me on countless trips. Figure out your ideal scenario, test it, then stick to it on the road.



## Movies and Time-Lapse

If you're thinking that you might create a slideshow as a final product, then you may want to add video clips and time-lapse photography to your list of possibilities. It's easy to integrate these with still shots to create a stunning presentation.

Video has the added benefit of capturing sound too. We often forget about environmental audio while on location, forcing us to use canned music once we're back at the computer. But, if you record video, and pay attention to the audio while doing so, those tracks can be separated and used with the still images too.

And then there's time-lapse. I think the best opportunity is when you have a great hotel room with lots of city-action outside. Or you might note a great location while out scouting, and return later to record the time-lapse. This type of footage makes a great introduction to slideshows and movies.

## Once You Return Home

There are so many things to do once you return from a trip. There's the unpacking, the laundry, mountains of emails, yard work, groceries, and a dozen other things. As a result, working on your pictures can get pushed to the bottom of the list.

If possible, find a way to elevate this most important To Do item. Organizing images and adding captions is much easier while it's all still fresh in your mind. Plus, it's critical that you back everything up as soon as possible.



**Figure 24:** Don't wait too long once you return home to work on your pictures in your favorite photo management app.

Here's a suggested workflow for the first week you return from a trip.

### Back Up Your Memory Cards

Even if you haven't had time to upload everything into your photo management application, back up your cards to an external hard drive. Be sure to include it all: JPEGs, RAWs, video, audio, and time-lapse.

### Copy Images to Photo Management Software and Rate Them

When you first bring in the shots to your management software, you'll want to look at them too (Figure 24). This is the time that you add star ratings. I recommend two passes. The first review is a "yay or nay." I use two stars for yay and no stars for nay.



Then filter the two star shots, and go through them a second time, elevating the really good images to 3 stars or more. Put the 3 star shots in their own collection. These are the images that you will refine and output.

## Only Edit the Good Stuff

You already have hundreds, if not thousands, of pictures from the trip. Don't waste your time on the mediocre ones. Use the rating system that I outlined, then put your efforts into refining the highly rated shots.

## Share the Best

Once you've touched-up the highly rated pictures, upload those to your cloud sharing. When someone asks about your trip, and wants to see the images, show them these. No one likes to sit around

while you sort through hundreds of shots trying to find a couple good ones. Have 'em ready to go.

## Back Up Your Catalog

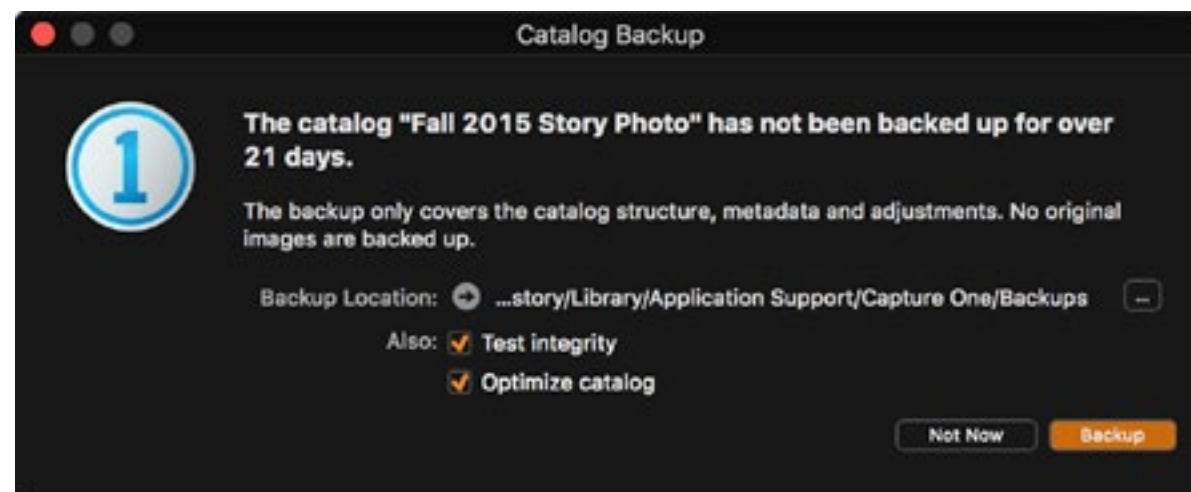
Yes, you backed up the masters when you first got home, but you've done a lot of work since then. And your time is valuable too. So run a second backup of your catalog that includes your image edits, captions, keywords, and star ratings (Figure 25).

## Produce a Work of Art

Beyond swiping through your favorites on a smartphone, create something magical with your photography. Maybe it's time to finally make a picture book. Build a slideshow and post it online. Fire up the inkjet printer and output enlargements or fine art greeting cards. These are the keepsakes that you will treasure years later.

## Now, and Only Now, Can You Erase Those Memory Cards

Up until this point, those original memory cards were your ace in the hole if something went wrong. But now that you've uploaded files to your photo management software, backed up everything to an external hard drive, posted your favorites in the cloud, and produced a hardbound book, I guess it's okay to format the memory cards and reuse them.



**Figure 25:** Your work and metadata are valuable too. Don't forget to back them up.



## One Last Thing

The irony about travel photography is that when it's all said and done, it's still about the people. We can shoot a hundred quaint countryside landscapes, but 20 years later what we really want to see are images of those who were willing to join us on these adventures, and the new friends we made along the way (Figure 26).

I'm closing with this because I've learned that our travel mates are the best part of exploration. Don't forget to capture these folks with your camera. Shoot candids and selfies. Use the self-timer to make group shots. Take advantage of these wonderful backdrops to produce the best portraits you've ever made.

In the end, those are the shots we'll care the most about. And they're the ones your kids will put on their mantle.



**Figure 26:** Years from now, what shots will you want to see?



## Author's Note

I wrote this e-book for two reasons. The first is because I want you to have a good understanding of what's involved when you travel—whether with family, solo, or on a workshop—and want to capture some great images.

Here's the second reason, which I also feel strongly about. Rocky Nook is a terrific publisher of photo books with many great authors. And I want more people to be exposed to their catalog. I'm hoping that this e-book will help with that.

Please share the download link with your friends and encourage them to be a part of the Rocky Nook community. By doing so, not only will they receive their legitimate free copy of this guide, but they will learn about the other books we have to offer. We promise we won't abuse your trust in us.

—Derrick Story



# Rocky Nook's Guide to Travel for Photographers

**Derrick Story**

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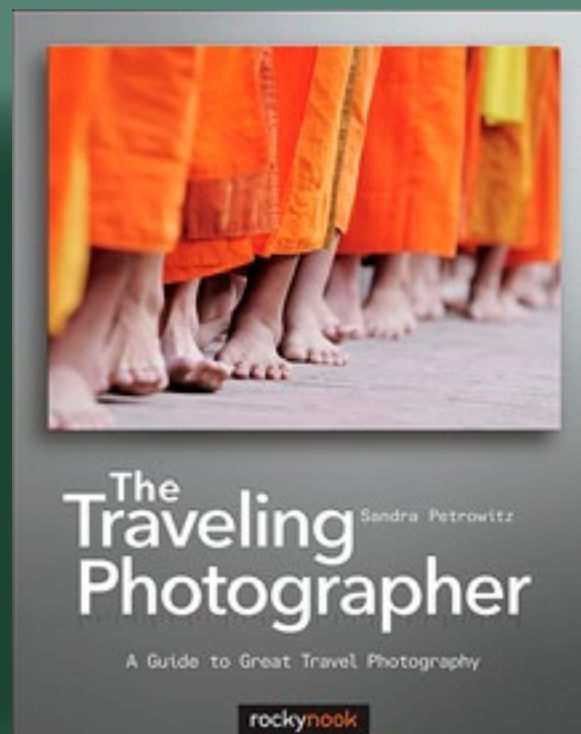
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